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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9178
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3711
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9921
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1229
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4325
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0183
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0082
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0203
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3912
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2180
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0271
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0929
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0857
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0361
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1755
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0986
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0125
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000155

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: ANDIJON-BASED ACTIVIST SAIDJAHON ZAYNABIDDINOV
AMNESTIED

REF: A. TASHKENT 143
[B. TASHKENT 152](#)
[C. TASHKENT 19](#)
[D. TASHKENT 126](#)
[E. TASHKENT 118](#)

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (U) On February 5, the independent Harakat.net website reported that Andijon-based human rights activist Saidjahon Zaynabiddinov had been amnestied and released from the Zangi Ota correctional camp in Tashkent province on February 2. The article reported a telephone conversation Zaynabiddinov had with Akbarali Arif, the Chairman of the Andijon-branch of the opposition political party Birlik who is currently in exile in Denmark, in which Zaynabiddinov stated that he had been treated well while incarcerated and even had earned 590,000 soums (465 dollars) while working at the prison. The article also noted that Zaynabiddinov was approached by prison officials on February 1 and asked to sign several unspecified document. On February 2, he was released from the prison camp and was personally driven home to Andijon by the camp's deputy director.

ZAYNIBIDDINOV SENTENCED FOR SPEAKING OUT ON ANDIJON EVENTS

[1](#)2. (U) Before his imprisonment, Zaynabiddinov served as Chairman of the human rights group "Appeliatsia" ("Appeal"), which was refused registration by authorities in March 2005. He was originally sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in January 2006 for extremist activity in connection with the May 2005 Andijon events. Uzbek authorities arrested Zaynabiddinov on May 21, 2005 and accused him of publishing

bulletins that "were intended to sow panic among the population" and undermine Uzbekistan's public image. Zaynabiddinov was one of the few activists in Andijon to provide up-to-the minute reporting on the events as they unfolded on May 13. In the days after the Andijon events, Zaynabiddinov gave dozens of interviews to the international press and others, accusing Uzbek forces of shooting unarmed protesters.

RAPID REACTION GROUP CONFIRMS ZAYNABIDDINOV'S RELEASE

13. (C) Members of the human rights Rapid Reaction Group (RRG) first reported Zaynabiddinov's release to poloff on January 125. At the time, they acknowledged that his release was just a rumor and could not be independently confirmed (ref A). On February 5, poloff received confirmation of Zaynabiddinov's release from RRG member Iskander Khudayberganov, who had spoken to Zaynabiddinov over the phone on February 4. On February 5, poloff was also able to reach Zaynabiddinov by telephone in Andijon, who reported that he was in good health and thanked the Embassy for its support during his incarceration, which he believed played an important role in his release. Zaynabiddinov also said that he planned to travel to Tashkent in the next few weeks and offered to meet with poloff then (Comment: We will see if Zaynabiddinov's comments about being treated well in prison are repeated when we meet with him in person. End comment.)

NEWSPAPER REPORTS 69 PRISONERS FROM ANDIJON AMNESTIED

14. (U) On February 5, the state-controlled Halq Sozi newspaper reported that 69 inmates from Andijon were released under the December 2007 amnesty. The article further noted 31 of the inmates had already been provided jobs and 17 others were in the process of being employed. The article did not mention Zaynabiddinov or any other political prisoners by name.

COMMENT

15. (C) Zaynabiddinov is the fourth high-profile human rights activist to be amnestied this year. In the past few days, the government also has amnestied Ikhtiyor Hamroev, the son of prominent human rights activist Bakhtiyor Hamroev, and former Human Rights Watch staffer and journalist Umida Niyazova (ref B). In January, the government also amnestied Ezgulik activist Karim Bozorbayev (ref C). In addition, several other political prisoners are rumored to be in line for amnesty (ref D). We will see if this becomes a trend, but for now it argues in support of the positive engagement the U.S. and others in the international community have adopted toward the GOU. We should look for ways to quietly reinforce these steps and encourage further releases.

16. (C) Zaynabiddinov was one of the government's most vocal critics in the aftermath of the Andijon events, and we have long assumed that his imprisonment was an attempt by the government to silence him. His release could be a sign that the government is finally ready to address Andijon. In recent weeks, the National Security Service also has shared with post a new video and report providing additional detail on the chronology of the events (ref E).

NORLAND